Five Days (To Midnight) by Blink_Blue

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It's been months since Steve left Hawkins and walked out of Billy's life. He's back for the holidays and Billy gets one last chance to make things right.

They have five days together. Five days left of the year. Five days to cherish.

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“I haven’t been able to stop thinking about you.”

Five Days (To Midnight)

Author's Note:

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I really hope y'all like this! Leave me a comment if you do!

December 26, 1985

He knows the invitation is coming as soon as he sees Joyce Byers' grinning face in the open doorway. She waves her arms at them in greeting, then turns it into a *'come in quickly'* gesture beckoning them out of the cold.

Billy hesitates. "Does she mean…"

Max smirks at her brother's fortune. "Yeah, you too."

Billy eyes the small house. He knows it's full of Max's friends, all of whom still hate his guts. Even though his relationship with Max slowly, painfully grew into a mutual acceptance—and on good days, they even like each other rather than just tolerate the other—he can't really blame her friends for hating him. The closest he ever got to apologizing to Lucas was a nod in the kid's direction and a civil attitude. But time passed, and the kids slowly got used to his presence. Becoming a better brother to Max, that seemed to really be the thing that did it.

"Just tell them I'm only here to drop you off."

Max glares at him from the passenger seat. "Don't be rude, Billy. Mrs. Byers has been nothing but nice to you." Billy avoids her gaze, knowing she's going to guilt him into socializing. "Look, she's probably just going to shove oven fresh cookies into your mouth. If you're lucky, there'll be spiked eggnog. Stay for a drink! Just to be polite."

Billy grimaces. It's not Max's nerdy friends he's wary of. Or even Nancy Wheeler and Jonathan Byers, who are sure to be inside. He

eyes Hopper's truck parked on the lawn, blocking off half the other cars from sight.

"Party with the Chief? Not exactly my idea of a good time."

Max shakes her head as they climb out of the car. "It won't be that bad. You don't have to stay long. Just say hello so everyone knows you're not an asshole anymore."

"Right," Billy mutters under his breath. He curls his fingers around the ends of his hair, trying to make himself look somewhat presentable as Max leads the way to the house.

Billy pauses on the porch. There are unpleasant memories associated with this house.

Max turns and she seems to understand the trepidation on his face. "Come on," she says softly.

Billy nods, pushing old thoughts out of his head. It was a long time ago. They've all moved on since then.

The smell of fresh baking along with a warm draft of air and friendly voices indeed greet them the second they step into the Byers' household. The whole gang is there. Lucas, Will, and Jane immediately run over to hug Max as Billy awkwardly stands out of the way. All the kids exchange their greetings, acting like they hadn't seen each other in years, as opposed to what it really was, just a small handful of days.

"Hi, Max!" Nancy welcomes her, and then her eyes land on Billy. For him, her eyes are a bit more reserved, but still bright and cheerful nonetheless. "Hi, Billy." There's a small, hesitant smile on her lips. "We weren't expecting you."

Billy shoves his hands into his jacket and clears his throat. "Just sayin' hi. Didn't want to be rude to—" His words are cut off when he finds himself pulled into a warm hug by none other than Mrs. Byers. He can't help but grin at her motherly greeting. "Merry Christmas," he says softly.

She pulls back and presses her hands lovingly against his cold cheeks.

“Merry Christmas, Billy. I’m so glad you could join us.”

“I’ll get you a beer,” Jonathan chimes.

“And I’ll pretend to look the other way.” Hopper winks in Billy’s direction, looking like he’s had more than his fair share of eggnog. Jane rolls her eyes at his behavior as Mike laughs by her side.

Billy notes that Jonathan and Nancy both have drinks in their hands. He nods thankfully. He’s already itching for a cigarette. But he looks around at the happy faces and thinks, this isn’t so bad. He can manage an hour of this. Then he’ll make an excuse to leave and let Max have her time with her friends.

Max’s gang is already bombarding her with questions of what she got for Christmas. She’s explaining it all excitedly when additional voices float in from the kitchen.

Billy’s chest hitches. His heart flutters painfully and his skin tingles. He knows that voice. He hasn’t heard that voice in months and his eyes search out the source of it.

It feels like he’s waking up from a dream, groggy and confused, trying to chase something that’s no longer there.

And then Steve Harrington steps into the living room, Dustin by his side, who waves his hands animatedly as he speaks. Steve grins at the kid. He hasn’t noticed the new arrivals yet and suddenly, Billy is frozen in place.

Dustin notices him first, and his mouth snaps shut mid-sentence.

Steve’s eyes widen when they land on him. Everything left unsaid between them hangs in the air, now thick with tension. And slowly, all the conversation in the room comes to a stop. Billy feels too many pairs of eyes on him, yet there’s only one pair that he’s concerned about.

“Billy,” Steve breaks the silence first. “It’s good to see you,” he says softly.

Billy nods awkwardly. “Y-yeah,” he stutters. “It’s been a long time.”

Understatement.

Thankfully, Jonathan returns with a fresh beer in his hand that he shoves towards him. Billy takes it graciously and nearly downs the entire thing as commotion resumes around him. How could he not have realized that Steve would be back in town for the holidays, and *of course* he would be at the Byers' Christmas party.

He curses himself for being thrown off guard. Among his regrets in life, Steve Harrington sits at the top of the list.

All the things he wanted to say to Steve these past few months roll around in his mind, a jumbled mess of thoughts, confessions, and apologies. He'd *ached* for him, missing his presence like a limb. For so many lonely nights, he racked his mind, trying to figure out if the pain he felt from his absence was because he's in love with Steve Harrington. And now that he's back… Billy wants to stride across the room and embrace him just to know that he's real. That he won't disappear like last time.

Steve says something to Dustin. He pulls Nancy into a one-armed hug and gives her a kiss on the cheek, right before he ruffles Jonathan's hair with his free hand and the other man jokingly calls him a jackass.

Steve excuses himself from the room and Billy silently counts to ten before following him.

He finds Steve in the kitchen, leaning against the sink and nursing a glass of Jameson.

"You look good, Harrington," Billy says softly as he approaches. It's not a lie either. Steve was always beautiful, but now there's a certain air about him, something different yet still so distinctly *Steve.* He fills out his clothes more and his hair is reaching new heights. College has treated him well.

Steve swallows but doesn't meet his eyes. "Thanks."

Billy steps closer still and the other man tenses. He gives him a small, wry smile. "College boy," he whispers. Pretty boy has become college

boy.

Steve's lips are parted but he doesn't say a word. Billy's eyes drop to stare at those lips.

"I haven't been able to stop thinking about you."

Billy thought those words would hurt to say, like he's giving up a part of himself, or admitting a weakness. Instead, it feels like a weight has been lifted off his chest. He reaches out with his hands to test the waters. Steve looks at him with wide, dark eyes. He doesn't protest and Billy takes that as permission to crush their lips together.

Steve whispers his name between kisses—*"Billy,"*—and it's music to his eyes. His hands are all over Steve's chest, pulling him as close as possible, but it's still not enough. He tastes him on his tongue, and there's no denying now that *Steve* is the reason he's been miserable these past few months, walking around like a zombie, aimless, hopeless, and loveless.

Unbeknownst to either of them, Dustin stands in the doorway frozen in shock. He only wanted another piece of Mrs. Byers' chocolate peppermint cheesecake. He wasn't expecting to walk in on a heavy make-out session between Steve and the crazy asshole who almost killed him just one year ago. Dustin blinks at the sight. A confusing combination of concern, outrage, and bitterness swells within him, and he ducks away before he gets caught.

Steve and Billy kiss until they're out of breath and panting. Steve's hands are buried in Billy's messy curls. "Fuck it," he mutters, and drags Billy out the back door, out of sight from any curious eyes that may look for them.

The air is biting and cold, but all they feel is each other.

"I missed you so much," Billy murmurs against Steve's lips, because though each kiss he plants on them may be a silent apology, he knows it's not enough.

They still remember each other's bodies like it was just yesterday.

Afterwards, they straighten their clothes. They fix their hair, rubbing

their reddened cheeks in an attempt to look normal and not like they just got each other off behind the house while everyone else celebrated the end of a good year.

They carefully step back inside and rejoin the others. Thankfully, nobody seems to have noticed their disappearance.

Billy has a hard time keeping his eyes off Steve for the rest of the night. Every time their eyes meet, Steve gives him a smile.

Later that night, Billy learns that they have five days together.

5.

On the first day, Billy drives to the quarry. His Camaro pulls up beside a familiar maroon Beemer. Steve's face is far too smug when Billy climbs out of his car. The quarry is quiet and secluded. It's safe.

Steve walks towards the tranquil water. Billy's eyes follow his back as he goes. He takes in the slope of his shoulders, the confidence of his gait, and the curve of his ass. He grins at the way the breeze ruffles the stupidly thick hair on top of Steve's head.

And Billy follows.

On the basketball court, they used to chase the ball. When they're alone, they chased each other. Until Steve left and never looked back.

For four months, Billy felt like he was chasing a ghost.

But now Harrington's back.

With a spring in his step, Billy tackles the other man in a vicious embrace. Steve lets out an embarrassing yelp and nearly stumbles to the ground, but Billy's got a strong hold on him in his arms. Billy's got him. And he doesn't plan on letting go this time.

"I told you to plant your feet," he whispers, before their lips meet in a soft kiss. It's less frantic than the previous day and Billy's whole body flushes warm. Steve moans against him and Billy swallows every beautiful sound that he makes.

Steve is gasping when he finally pulls back. His lips are deliciously swollen, his pupils blown wide. “I hope you haven’t lost your touch,” he murmurs heavily.

Billy raises a daring eyebrow. He grabs Steve’s arm and pulls him back towards the cars. “You’re about to find out.”

In seconds, Billy’s pinning Steve against plush leather seats. Clothes are stripped off and hastily thrown aside, all the while, they fight to keep their lips and hands on each other.

They have a lot of time to make up for.

From experience, they know that sex in the backseat of a car isn’t as easy as the movies make it out to be. Especially when two dicks are involved. But when it’s sex with Steve… somehow the fight and the struggle to find that perfect way that their bodies fit together, it’s worth every damn bit of effort.

Billy digs out a strip of condoms and a bottle of lube from his jacket pocket. No way he wasn’t coming prepared.

Steve’s eyes widen comically. “How many times were you planning on fucking me?” He gapes.

Billy tears one of the packets open with his teeth as he grins. “Until I’m satisfied.”

Billy fucks Steve with all the raw emotion that had been built up inside him. He fucks him until Steve is a blubbering, incoherent mess, his hands weakly grasping Billy’s arms. The bright, red scratches Steve left along his back hurt so good.

They cycle through moments of rough, *brutal* fucking and gentle tenderness, so sweet that it makes Billy’s head spin. Steve’s legs tighten around his hips. His lips are parted in a breathless ecstacy, and Billy knows that he’s close. He can taste it on the tip of his tongue and he wants *more.*

Steve lets out a broken gasp and Billy swallows the sound with his mouth.

This was always the easiest part of *Billy and Steve*. Whatever they were, whatever they had, *this* was always good and easy, simple and uncomplicated. They know what the other likes, and sometimes, even what the other needs.

These patterns are the easy ones to fall back into.

When it's over, Billy chuckles through an uneven breath as Steve whines about ruining his upholstery.

They don't talk about the months that Steve was away. They don't talk about the blowup that led up to it, the fight and the regrets that still run deep in his veins. Billy doesn't talk about how he cried when he realized Steve had actually left Hawkins. And Steve doesn't mention how every blond boy baring even a slight resemblance that he saw on campus, made his heart hurt.

*

Later that night, Steve is about to go to bed when something small hits the outside of his bedroom window. He slides it up carefully, his expression incredulous when he sees Billy standing in his backyard throwing pebbles to get his attention.

"What are you doing?" He whispers, though his parents sleep on the other side of a big house. They couldn't possibly hear them.

Billy smirks up at him and licks his lips suggestively.

A grin slowly spreads wide on Steve's face. "Hang on," he says softly. "I'll be right down."

A moment later, the door to the backyard slides open. "Get in here," Steve tugs on the other man's arm, and Billy lets himself be pulled into a crushing, warm embrace.

4.

On the second day, Steve wakes up to the feeling of eyes watching his face.

"Are you just watching me sleep?" He asks groggily as he peels one

eye open slowly. Billy grins silently as he watches him. “Fucking creep,” Steve mutters as he pulls the comforter tighter over his chest, desperate to get at least a few more minutes of shut eye in the warmth of their cocoon.

Billy presses their bodies close, wrapping an arm tightly around his waist. His breath brushes against Steve’s neck. “Your parents don’t have plans with you today, do they?”

“Mm-mm,” Steve mumbles as he shakes his head. “Christmas dinner is about all the time they wanna spend with me.” He’s not exactly complaining though. Sitting through one meal as his mother badgers him with questions about school and his father tries to act like he gives a damn is more than enough for one visit home.

But Billy’s eyes furrow, unable to comprehend why they wouldn’t be desperate to spend all the time in the world with their son after not seeing him for four months. Some people’s priorities must just be fucked. “Well, good,” he finally says. “Don’t want them ruining our plans together.”

Steve sends him a curious look. “What did you want to do today?”

Billy hooks a leg around Steve’s and raises his eyebrows high.

Steve snorts and rolls his eyes.

“Just this,” Billy growls, his voice low. “All day long, just this.”

There were many mornings before, just like this one. Waking up with their dicks hard and their minds foggy with sleep. Morning breath be damned, they’d fuck and kiss and *bite* until they *had* to get out of bed. Steve’s big house, usually devoid of parents, gave them this luxury.

For a while, it seemed like Steve’s bed was the only place Billy could release a hidden side of himself. Not one that was necessarily *kind,* but still very different from the Billy that Steve knew in school. The irony is that the safety of these walls allowed them a freedom that they didn’t have anywhere else.

The Billy who kissed him hard, and fucked him harder, the Billy who would sometimes wake him with a finger in his ass, or if he was

really lucky, a tongue… the Billy who could be gentle and even sweet in rare moments, Steve never saw that beyond the walls of his bedroom.

“I guess we could stay here all day,” Steve says softly. “Let’s hope my mom actually stocked the house with food for once.”

Billy watches his face carefully. “Did you miss them? Your parents,” he clarifies. “Gone for a whole semester… you get homesick at all?”

“Not really,” Steve admits after a moment. “I mean, I got homesick sure, but… I don’t know, my mom makes me call once a week… that’s more than enough for me. There were other things in Hawkins that I missed more than my parents.”

Billy’s afraid to ask where he landed on the list of things that Steve missed.

“Why did you decide to go?” Billy asks instead. “Last time we talked about it, you were still on the fence.” He swallows the lump in his throat painfully, hoping his voice doesn’t come out trembling and unsteady. “And then you were just gone.”

“The last time we talked about it, you weren’t up for much talking,” Steve says softly, not meeting his eyes.

Steve had mulled over his college acceptance for weeks. Billy sneered every time Steve brought up the subject. *‘Rich, little college boy going off to get a fancy education. I don’t make fun of you enough, Harrington?’*

Billy’s plans after high school were simple. Start training with the local mechanic. He’s good with cars and even better with his hands. Steve knew that from experience. Billy never wanted to talk about the possibility of Steve leaving Hawkins.

“I wanted to keep my options open,” Steve says at the other man’s silence. “My dad still wants me to work for him. At least with a degree… if I wanted to do something else, I’ll have other choices. I don’t want to be stuck in some small town, working sales for my dad for the rest of my life.”

The silence drags so long, Steve thinks Billy’s tongue must have

gotten stuck in his mouth. But then the other man none-too-gently grips him by the hips and flips him over onto his stomach. Steve's heart races a mile-a-minute every time Billy reminds him that he can throw him around in a way no girl ever could.

All thoughts of the past are momentarily forgotten when Billy proceeds to do things to him that have him biting the pillow just to keep quiet.

*

Late in the evening, Steve finally drags them out of the house for food.

Billy only agrees as long as they go to a place of his choosing. A twenty-four hour diner, a real hole-in-the-wall type of place on the edge of town. Steve knows it's because they're less likely to run into anyone they know. But it's a small town. Steve doesn't have the heart to tell Billy that there probably isn't a soul around who wouldn't recognize 'the Harrington boy'.

Now the old Billy comes back out. He's hard and detached, eyes barely meeting Steve's when he does speak, gruff and antagonistic at every attempt at conversation. It's a stark reminder of how Billy never gave him a reason to stay.

Steve's tired and emotionally drained by the end of it.

But once they're back at the house, Billy turns the charm back on. It takes a while before Steve's enthusiasm comes back.

3.

On the third day, Steve tells Billy he has other plans.

"The fuck do you mean you have to hang out with those kids today?"

"Dustin wants to catch up," Steve explains, not meeting his eyes as he throws on a heavy winter coat.

"Well… it's not gonna take all day, right?" Billy demands.

“It’ll take as long as it takes.”

Billy grimaces and bites his lip, trying to tell himself the disappointment isn’t burning a hole deep in his gut. He knows Steve and the curly-haired boy are close. He thought it was weird at first. Why the hell is Steve hanging out with a fucking kid? Dustin looks at Steve with hero-worship in his eyes while Max and the rest of their gang of nerds have their fond adoration for him, yet still act like he’s a total bozo. He doesn’t know why Steve gives a damn about any of them.

“I can’t believe you’d rather hang out with that dweeb than with me,” Billy grumbles.

“He’s my family.”

Billy looks up in shock.

“They all are,” Steve says carefully. “The kids, Nancy, Joyce, Hopper… Jonathan, too. They might not be the ones who pay my tuition, or the people I spend Christmas day with, but… they’re my family.”

“They really mean a lot to you, don’t they?” Billy whispers softly.

“Yeah, they do.” Steve slowly meets his eyes. “My parents aren’t home, so… you can let yourself out.”

Billy watches him go. The other man gently closes the bedroom door behind him with a click and he finds himself alone in Steve’s bedroom. He had yet to even get dressed. Maybe a part of him had been hoping his dick could convince Steve to stay.

*

Steve thought Dustin was going to berate him with more questions about college. He had prepared anecdotes about girls, dorm-living, and partying. All the essentials for how to be a cool guy on a college campus.

He wasn’t ready for what came out of Dustin’s mouth the second they’re alone in Steve’s car.

“When were you going to tell me about you and Billy Hargrove?!”

Steve’s eyes nearly jump out of their sockets. “W-what?” He sputters helplessly as he stares at him.

“You!” Dustin leans over the center console and stabs a finger into Steve’s chest. “And Billy Hargrove!”

“H-how do you know about that?”

“I saw you two making out in Mrs. Byers’ kitchen on Thursday!” He glares daggers as the other man closes his eyes heavily. The information had been stewing in his head for days as he pondered what to do with it. Dustin felt like he was bursting at the seams and it took everything he had not to tell anyone what he saw. “What the hell were you thinking?”

“I—uh…” Steve sighs and looks aways, unable to meet the accusatory glare Dustin sends his way. “Shit, I didn’t want you to find out this way,” he groans.

“You didn’t want me to find out at all!” Dustin corrects him with a huff. “Am I right?”

“Yeah, you’re right,” Steve reluctantly mutters softly.

“Friends don’t keep secrets, Steve.”

“It’s… it’s hard to explain.” Impossible, more like, because Steve can hardly understand it himself. How could he put into words what this *thing* between him and Billy is? Billy never wanted to talk about it. Nothing seems to have changed the second time around. The easy answer would be that it’s just sex. But Steve knows he’d be lying through his damn teeth. It’s far more complicated than merely saying *‘the sex is good and we just get our rocks off together, no biggie’*.

“Look… I know it’s a bit of a shock, but just because I’m sometimes into guys as well—”

“I don’t care that you’re into dudes!” Dustin cuts him off angrily. “I care that it’s Billy fucking Hargrove! Max’s psycho brother! The guy who attacked Lucas! The guy who nearly beat you half to death! I

care that he's not someone who deserves you!"

Steve's mouth opens and closes silently like a gaping fish. The tenderness he feels for the kid hurts something awful in his chest. And he suddenly feels guilty for keeping all of this from him. He thinks of Dustin like a little brother. He couldn't love him more even if he were his own blood.

He reaches out and settles a hand gently on Dustin's shoulder. "He's not that bad," Steve finally says softly. "He's… he's not the guy you think he is."

Dustin finds it difficult to believe him.

"This was going on last summer, wasn't it? This is why you were acting so weird right up until the minute you left for school."

Steve's heart continues to sink into his gut. Dustin's intuition is one of his greatest qualities, but sometimes it can be a damn pain in the ass.

"He broke your heart, didn't he? Whatever happened between you and Billy… that's why you left like you did."

Steve looks away. Months away from Hawkins couldn't put thoughts of Billy Hargrove completely out of his mind. Time lessened the pain, but the lack of proper closure made it impossible to fully heal. Billy was always there, in the back of his mind and weighing heavily in his heart, like a festering wound.

There's nothing Steve can really say to explain the impassioned, carnal nature of his relationship with Billy. The gratification he gets when he's with Billy is only matched by the ferocity of his heart break.

Perhaps some things are better left alone. When all is said and done, Steve would rather not reopen old wounds.

"Yeah."

*

That night, Steve makes sure the lights are out by the time Billy

arrives outside his bedroom window. Pebbles tap loudly against the glass again and again. Steve closes his eyes as he lays in his bed, silently begging the other man to just give up and go home. His name, angrily whispered, floats through the glass. He tosses and turns until he can't ignore it anymore.

Billy is furious by the time Steve finally opens the sliding glass door to the backyard.

"What the hell, Steve?" He growls, struggling to keep his voice down. "What. The. Hell."

"I don't think you should come in tonight."

Billy's face falls. "What?"

Steve's eyes drop to the ground. He has to be stronger than this. He swallows the lump in his throat. He'd spent hours agonizing over this, over *them*. He lost himself in the past and deep down he knows that it's Billy's nature to push him away, to keep him at a distance. Truth be told, sometimes he can't really fault the other man for it.

But he doesn't want to live in the past anymore. He doesn't want to hurt anymore.

He watched the way Billy's expression went from angry to confused, and now to something *devastated*. And Steve thinks that they do this all too often. Hurt each other.

It's better this way, Steve tells himself.

"We shouldn't be doing this, Billy."

Billy shakes his head, blond curls falling into his face. "Are you… you can't be serious," he croaks.

Steve only manages a meager shrug.

"Five days, Harrington," Billy says softly, trying not to show that it feels like he's being stabbed in the heart. "You told me that we had *five* days."

“What does it matter what I said?” Steve sighs softly. His shoulders sag as the fight drains from him, and he’s suddenly exhausted. All the things he’d kept bottled up inside for so long spill out with mirthless abandon. “I’m not the one who stopped it. You told me that you didn’t care. You told me we were nothing, that *I* was nothing to you. You told me to leave. So I did. So why are we still doing this?”

Billy can’t deny any of it. He can’t deny it the way he denied his feelings for so long. And ultimately, he lost the first person he had ever let into his heart. He wants to kick himself as tears prick his eyes, regret and embarrassment run through his body, but all he sees is the pain and sadness on Steve’s face, mirroring his own.

Billy looks at Steve, pleading with his eyes as he shakes his head. He whispers in a voice that doesn’t sound like his own, *“I didn’t mean it.”*

Steve shakes his head slowly. “How the hell am I supposed to know what you mean?”

Billy doesn’t answer.

“Go home, Billy,” Steve tells him, his hand on the glass door.

Billy wants to cry and scream that Steve doesn’t get to do this to him. He wants to slam his fists against the glass until it shatters into a million pieces, just like his heart. He’s never been one to beg, but he would drop to his knees for Harrington if he would have him.

“Go,” Steve says again. “Before you wake my parents up. I’ll see you around, or… whatever.”

Billy stands frozen as Steve slides the door closed in his face. He watches him walk away. At least this time, he has the luxury of actually seeing him go. His heart aches with the realization that Steve had given up on them.

He catches his reflection in the glass. His tears grow until he barely sees himself anymore, and then they fall.

Billy knows he’s got nobody to blame but himself.

2.

The next day, Billy begs.

“I didn’t mean it, Steve. I didn’t mean *any* of it,” he tells him.

“The fuck do you think this is, Harrington?”

“I don’t think I’m asking for much here!”

“You’re acting like a faggot.” Billy spits the words in Steve’s face and the other man flinches at the harshness behind them.

But Steve doesn’t back down. He’s faced a lot worse than Billy Hargrove with his shoulders squared and his feet firmly planted on the ground. “And you’re acting like you don’t give a shit about me. I’m fucking sick of it.”

“What makes you think it’s an act?” Billy sneers. “You want to go off to college, find yourself a nice girl and a steady job that nets you six figures. And then you’re gonna settle into a boring life with your big, fancy house at the end of a cul-de-sac. Tell me why I should give a damn.”

“Don’t act like you have a clue what I want,” Steve hisses through gritted teeth.

Billy laughs, cruel and biting. “God, you are so fucking transparent, Harrington.”

“And you’re not as good an actor as you think you are.”

Billy’s face hardens. “The fuck did you say to me?”

“You care, Billy. I know you fucking care. I’m not asking you marry me, I’m asking you to show me that there’s something worth sticking around for!”

Something dangerous flashes across Billy’s face right before he grabs Steve by the front of his shirt. He throws him hard against the side of the car and Steve grunts when his back spasms painfully from the force of it. He winces like Billy might start throwing punches.

“You’re just a hot piece of ass, Harrington,” Billy growls. “I thought you knew that by now. Pretty boys like you are a dime a dozen. I

*don't **need** you to warm my bed for me, so don't get any ideas in that pretty little head of yours. I made it clear what this was a long time ago. Stop acting like a fucking girl. If that's what I wanted, I'd be sticking my dick in some chick and not you."*

Billy's voice trembles and his heartbeat is ratcheting up in his chest as he's berated by painful memories. "I shouldn't have said those things to you. I'm… god, I'm so sorry, Steve."

After a moment, Steve looks up to meet Billy's eyes.

"I… I was so fucking stubborn," Billy continues softly, his voice a little shaky. He needs to get these words out, and he needs to do it before Steve walks away from him again. There's so much that's been burning on his tongue for months, and if he doesn't do this now, he knows he'll be filled with regret for the rest of his life. "After… after, I stayed away from you. Because I was scared. I was scared that you hated me… I was scared of myself, and I was scared of my feelings for you."

Steve's eyes soften. His shoulders sag as his entire posture relaxes at Billy's confession. Billy takes a shuddered breath. Steve's always been so damn readable.

"After a while, I couldn't stay away anymore," Billy whispers. "I tried looking for you, but your car was never home. I thought I was going crazy," he chuckles wryly. "I finally asked Max, and… she told me you left for school two fucking weeks ago."

"I cried for like a week," Billy admits with a dry chuckle when Steve takes his hand. He lets himself be pulled into a kiss. Steve brushes their lips together and his eyes flutter shut. It feels too soft, too real, and too good, that Billy doesn't want to open his eyes. He doesn't want any of this to end.

"We only have a day left," Steve murmurs softly against his lips. "I'm going back on the first."

Billy meets his eyes and doesn't hesitate. "I want that day. I want it, Steve."

Steve gives him a small smile, and his grip tightens around Billy's arms. "You can visit me, you know?" He says softly.

"Visit you? At school?"

"Why not?" Steve asks. "It's only a two hour drive. I'm free on weekends. I have a single dorm, you can stay over."

Billy scoffs and drops his gaze as discomfort rolls around in the pit of his stomach. "Wouldn't want to bother the big man on a college campus," he says dryly.

"It's not like that," Steve says quietly.

Billy bites his lip before he states what the concern *really* is. "Don't want all your friends to think you're a fag for having a guy over in your room."

Steve watches him for a long moment. "I can handle it," he finally says.

But Billy's fallen silent again, unsure and unconvinced.

"It's okay," Steve says lightly. "It's okay if you don't want to. It was just a thought. I told you we only had five days anyway, right? I… I shouldn't have expected more." He forces a smile and chooses to change the subject. "What are you doing tomorrow night?"

Tomorrow is New Year's Eve. Billy's plans were to get wasted and find some girl to grope around midnight. Now everything's changed. "Was planning on going to Tina's party," he mutters. "That was before I knew you were in town." He hesitates before he asks, "You?"

"Hopper's throwing somethin'. It's gonna be small, but… well, you know who's all going to be there."

"Yeah, yeah." Billy nods softly. "Max mentioned that. I know she's going."

"You wanna come?"

New Year's Eve, 1985

Much of their last day is spent without leaving Steve's bed. Billy wakes him up with soft kisses, roaming his hands over Steve's body, and dragging his nails over sharp hip bones and firm muscles. He presses kisses from his chest to his neck until Steve's fully awake, getting more aroused by the second.

Billy fucks him slow that morning. He takes his time, wanting to drag it out as long as he possibly can. Steve shows his gratitude with choked moans and broken whimpers. Billy wants to make him feel good. In a way, he does it in hopes that Steve won't forget him when he leaves.

Billy would never admit it, but he loves it when they fuck face-to-face. He relishes Steve arching up beneath him. He gets to see every look of ecstasy on his face, and he gets to taste those sweet lips. When he hits that spot just right, rolling his hips the way he *knows* drives Steve mad, the other man falls to pieces beneath his hands.

Billy laces their fingers together. He presses Steve's hands into the mattress as he moves his hips faster and faster. Steve's legs tighten around him and Billy's struck by the shocking realization that they're not just fucking. They're *making love.*

"Goddamn, Harrington," Billy gasps as he continues to bury his cock deep in the other man's body. *Fuck, he's going to miss this.*

He slumps forward when it's over, their chests damp with sweat. Billy lays his head beside Steve's face. The other man's bottom lip is painted an angry red because he insists on gnawing on it in some silly attempt to keep quiet. There's no one in the house to hear them. Billy brushes his thumb over it as they both catch their breaths, letting their heart rates slowly return to a steady pace.

"I don't want you to go."

"You know I have to," Steve murmurs, watching him with half-closed lids.

“Yeah,” Billy says softly. “I know.”

They spend hours laying in bed, talking about everything except the truth that hangs over their heads. Billy spills secrets that he’d never told another soul. He tells him about his life before, in California, a time when he hadn’t always been so angry. He tells him about his father—Steve already has a pretty good idea, but he listens willingly as Billy shares his story. And without Steve asking, Billy tells him about his mother.

He wants to share everything with Steve. Everything.

Late in the day, Steve drags them into the shower. Billy sucks his cock until Steve is a wet, trembling mess collapsed against the shower wall, and then he fucks him hard until he cums again. The water runs cold over them, but that’s not the only reason they shiver.

Steve lets Billy borrow his nice clothes, and they head over to Hopper’s.

They’re welcomed with open arms, and no one mentions the fact that Billy is wearing a designer shirt that fits a bit too tight over his chest, or the fact that their cars arrived at the same time.

Billy still feels out of place, even more so when Steve is instantly swarmed by the people who love him. But he tries not to let it show as he watches Steve’s smile grow around his family.

“Spring break’s not that far off, buddy,” Steve tells Dustin.

“Yeah, right. Your parents are probably gonna send you to Cancún or something.

“I’d rather be in Hawkins than on a sunny beach sipping tequila martinis anyday.”

Billy does his best to mingle. It gets easier after a few drinks and everyone around him is having a good time. He even strikes up a conversation with Nancy. Her college applications are in and she’s waiting to hear back from her top schools. He figures with her smarts and talents, not even the top schools would reject her. There’s appreciation in her eyes when he tells her so.

“There’s something different about you, Billy Hargrove,” Nancy says, a soft smile on her lips. “Whatever it is… I like it.”

Billy continues to stew in mild discomfort after Nancy walks away.

He keeps one eye on Steve and the other on his own drink for the rest of the night. He’s on his sixth beer, the buzz from the alcohol warms his veins, when Max approaches him.

“Are you gonna kiss him at midnight?”

Billy sputters and chokes, and she laughs loudly at his expense.

“What the fuck are you talkin’ about?”

Max snorts. “You know exactly what I’m talking about.” Her eyes land on Steve, who’s huddled with Nancy and Jonathan around the bonfire, laughing at something only they can hear. “It’s your last chance, right?”

Billy doesn’t want to think about last chances.

But she’s right, it is their last day. Who knows when he’ll see Steve again, and people can change so quickly in just a few months.

The kids get more hyped up as midnight approaches, too much sugar and excitement in their system. It’s rare moments that they’re allowed up this late. Billy envies their freedom as they run around carefree and laughing, even as Joyce reprimands them to be careful. But Hopper’s got a warm arm around her and they grin softly at each other as they watch the kids run wild.

Jonathan and Nancy are holding hands as they chat. Maybe he’s imagining it, but Billy thinks Steve looks more and more like a third wheel as midnight draws close. The space between him and his friends is made more apparent when Nancy huddles against her boyfriend from the harsh bite of the wind. Steve stands awkwardly to the side, hands stuffed into his jacket pockets.

Billy’s already walking over when Hopper’s booming voice cries out to get their attention.

“Midnight approaching, folks!”

Someone lights a firecracker and the sounds of excited, screaming children resonate through the air as Billy makes a beeline across the small yard.

“Ten! Nine! Eight …”

“Harrington.”

There’s a reserved expression on Steve’s face when he sees him, some mixture of hopeful hesitation shines in Steve’s eyes.

“Five! Four! Three …”

Billy takes a deep breath. Steve’s eyes widen when he realizes what Billy’s about to do.

“Two!”

Billy grins wide, licking his lips as he takes a step closer. The nerves that he thought would be screaming in his veins disappear because Steve looks so fucking beautiful in the light of the fire. Billy would be goddamned if he let this one slip through his fingers.

Steve is so fucking kissable.

“One!”

And that’s exactly what Billy does.

“Happy New Year!”

The sounds and commotion, whoops and cheers are drowned into the background as they kiss. Billy’s hand comes up to rest gently on Steve’s face, the other buries itself in his perfectly ruffled hair.

When they part, still mere inches between them, the sounds of the kids cheering finally meet their ears.

They look up hesitantly to see grinning faces all around them.

Billy feels more elated than he ever thought possible. He can’t even

find it in himself to roll his eyes at Max's smug grin.

"Happy New Year, Harrington," Billy whispers, turning back to the other man.

Steve grins softly as his warm arms hold him close.

"Happy New Year, Billy."

+ 1986

A loud knock raps against the door and Steve frowns given the late hour. He's got classes the next day and he's going to lose it if it's another one of his neighbors asking to hang out in his room to watch his goddamn television.

Steve opens the door and his jaw drops when he sees the man on the other side.

Billy grins as he leers at him, leaning against the door frame. His stupid leather jacket is wet from the snow.

"Hey, Harrington," Billy drawls. "Got room for company tonight?"

Steve stares for a solid moment before he recovers from the shock. He reaches out and grabs Billy by his jacket. He grins as he pulls him into the room and slams the door shut behind him.

"Get in here, Hargrove. We've got time to make up for."

Author's Note:

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